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Earlier this week, "Sid the Science Kid" hit the television airwaves. Sid is the First 5 California and PBS sponsored educational program for preschoolers that uses humor to promote exploration, discovery and science education. The series is jointly produced by The Jim Henson Company and KCET-TV, Los Angeles. Sid – the program's lovable

star - starts each half-hour show with a new question such as "Why are my shoes shrinking?" or "Why do bananas get mushy?" He then works with his family, friends and teacher to find the answers.

In anticipation of the show's launch, KCET hosted two premier events. First 5 California's "Sid" series project manager Carmen Padilla attended the first event hosted by the KCET Community Advisory Board on August 21 at the PBS affiliate's Hollywood studios.

The event included a preview of the TV series, demonstration of the "Sid" Web site, and a panel discussion on science education in the US featuring Moises Roman, Preschool Science Educator and series content advisor; Dr. Art Hammon, an Education Specialist with Jet Propulsion Laboratory; and Chris Mooney, author and science editor for Science Progress magazine. "What a wonderful way to expose young children to real science in a conceptual way that their young minds understand and not the far-

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fetched or make-believe science as seen in movies,” Hammon said.

A second event for Web site bloggers took place August 26 at the Jim Henson studios, where attendees got a behind-the-scenes tour of Sid’s “home.”

“Sid the Science Kid” airs daily on PBS Kids. First 5 California provides major funding for the program and supports the show’s focus on school readiness and fostering kids’ curiosity about the world around them.

To help publicize the show’s debut, First 5 California’s Hands-on Health van distributed information to parents at events in August and September. On future tours, First 5 California will further incorporate “Sid” into the exhibit to help spread educational messages to California families.

For more information on “Sid the Science Kid,” check your local Public Television listing for viewing times, or visit www.pbs.org/sid.

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Power of Preschool (PoP) Progress Report

The First 5 California Power of Preschool Demonstration Project is making a difference in the quality of participating preschools and the qualifications of their teachers, according to a soon-to-be-released progress report.

First 5 California developed the "Power of Preschool Demonstration Program Progress Report" after policymakers and early childhood education practitioners expressed interest in the project’s status. It contains program and practice data from November 2005 through March 2008, the first two-and-a-half years of the program.

The report will be available in mid-September. It captures data from the nine participating Power of Preschool counties and includes a statewide profile, individual county program profiles, evaluations, lessons learned, conclusions and

next steps.

Maria Balakshin, First 5 California education administrator, led the project. "PoP demonstrates the importance of quality enhancement programs," she said.

The report reveals key program advances: PoP counties' dedicated staff implemented high quality preschool programs; counties scored high on the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS); and a significant number of the PoP teaching staff in the participating counties achieved higher degree requirements faster than expected with 45 percent now holding a Bachelor's degree and 24 early childhood education units. "Program developers initially believed it would take the full five years of the program for teachers to meet the higher requirements," Balakshin said.

The report indicates a need for more trained external ECERS/ FCCERS (Family Child Care Evaluation Rating Scale) reviewers to ensure quality preschool ratings. In addition, California needs a program database to collect and compile county and state information. Bringing together diverse organizations to support PoP demands thoughtful investments of time, funding, facilitation, and other support resources is another valuable lesson learned.

Balakshin thanked the nine participating county commissions – Los Angeles, Merced, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Ventura and Yolo. "I must acknowledge these county partners for their dedication and hard work," she said.

She also thanked the PoP coordinators and other county and agency personnel responsible for implementing PoP for their responsiveness in providing requested data. "This important work enriches the lives of kids in California," Balakshin said.

First 5 California plans to distribute two copies of the report to each First 5 county commission. Additional copies will be available upon request.

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First 5 releases Web-based PoP Reporting System

The new Web-based Power of Preschool reporting system is up and running. Counties will now report PoP evaluation information using the new Web-based forms. On August 26, First 5 California provided virtual training for PoP counties on the new system, focusing on how to access the new forms and complete the PoP report.

The First 5 California Research and Evaluation site is now revised to incorporate the enhancements to PoP reporting at www.first5eval.com/reporting0708.htm. These enhancements include the Web-based reporting system, user access instructions, revised reporting forms and written guidance for PoP data collection and evaluation reporting. Please review the site and its contents.

Although the annual due date for the PoP evaluation report is November 1, First 5 California appreciates county assistance in submitting the information before September 30, if possible.

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A New “Face” to First 5

First 5 California is expanding its reach with Facebook, the most-trafficked social networking Web site and fourth most-trafficked site in the world. We are using Facebook – a free forum that helps people connect and interact with friends, family and others – as a digital platform to share First 5 news, photos and details on upcoming events.

The 90 million Facebook members can now see First 5 California's profile video “For the Children,” photos from past media events, information on how to obtain a *Kit for New Parents*, upcoming tour stops for First 5's Hands-on Health van, and a “coming soon” alert for the Chef LaLa recipe booklet.

Visit the new First 5 California Facebook page at www.facebook.com/pages/Sacramento-CA/First-5-California/34862144296. If you are not already a Facebook member, signing up is easy and free at Facebook.com.

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First 5 California 2009 Annual Statewide Conference - SAVE THE DATES!

First 5 California's 2009 Annual Statewide Conference is scheduled for April 14-16 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in San Francisco. The Pre-conference Institutes take place April 14 while the main conference sessions run from April 15-16.

Keep your eye on this space for more information in the coming months. Pre-registration materials and the preliminary program agenda will be available January 2009.

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Midwest Trip Reunion

Last April, First 5 California and 16 delegates from the Golden State spent two days visiting early learning system models in Chicago and Omaha, Nebraska. On August 11 we returned the favor by hosting a reunion meeting here in California.

Nearly all of the original 16 delegates attended the reunion and most brought other partners representing early childhood development programs from local and county programs throughout California.

Executive Director Kris Perry began the meeting with a brief re-cap of the trip. "Today, we are here to leverage lessons learned so we can take the next step in California," she said in welcoming the participants and setting the tone for the California meeting.

The reunion participants reflected on lessons learned from the Midwest trip, shared key take-away messages, and enjoyed a photo slideshow

that captured trip highlights.

First 5 California's Sarah Neville-Morgan and Kimberly McDaniel ended the reunion meeting with a discussion on building synergy in California to increase investments in quality, evidence-based services for children 0 to 5 and their families. They focused the discussion on Practice, Policy and Research. As this group "builds a big tent" and coordinates efforts with others, it moves toward implementing in California what Nobel Prize winning economist, Dr. James Heckman, aptly stated: "The real question is how to use the available funds wisely. The best evidence supports the policy prescription: Invest in the very young."

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Communications Technical Assistance (TA) Web site launched

The First 5 California Communications TA Web site, created exclusively to assist county commissions with their local public education and outreach efforts, goes live this month.

This site houses numerous resources to help county commissions reach their target audiences, including media, stakeholders, parents and caregivers. These resources include photographs with royalty-free images; an archive of outreach materials, prewritten articles and public service announcements; professional development and communications training resources; radio news releases; and fact sheets on a variety of topics such as school readiness and special needs.

Only registered county communications officers and/or executive directors may access these resources by visiting <https://services.cafc.ca.gov/countyta> and logging in. A username, password and instructions will be sent in a separate e-mail.

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First 5 Solano wins prestigious award

Congratulations to First 5 Solano! The California State Association of Counties honored the First 5 Solano Children and Families Commission with its 2008 Challenge Award for developing two innovative programs and strategic partnerships that saved Solano County nearly \$4 million. First 5 Solano received one of 10 Challenge Awards available to a field of 255 entries.

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“Atta boy” for Mobile Health Van



We often hear from First 5 county commission executive directors and staff about how much they appreciate

visits from our Hands-on Health Mobile van, but First 5 California Executive Director Kris Perry recently received a letter from a local commission that went above and beyond.

“We were thrilled to have the Hands-on Health van at our ‘Vallejo Celebrates Youth’ event,” said First 5 Solano Commission Chair Sharon Tucker, about the van’s August 5 visit. “We gave away over 500 books and over 100 *Kits for New Parents*. Thanks to the van’s ‘edutainers,’ hundreds of young Solano children had fun learning about good health and nutrition through the van’s interactive games and distribution of health resources.”

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Budget Update

The state continues to operate without a budget for the new fiscal year. As the legislative leaders continue to negotiate the state budget, First 5 California stands by its publicly-stated intent to offer assistance during the state’s fiscal crisis, while also upholding its voter mandate to protect the needs of California’s youngest children.

This year’s regular legislative session ended

August 31. The governor has until September 30 to sign or veto bills passed by the Legislature.

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Evaluation Technical Assistance

The Research and Evaluation Team held a technical assistance conference call August 21. The notes from this call and information about accessing the conference call recording are on the First 5 Web site under "Statewide Evaluation". Please check the Web site for details regarding the next technical assistance conference call scheduled for September 22 from 10:00 - 10:30 a.m.

If you have any evaluation questions, or need assistance with PEDS, please e-mail evaluation@ccfc.ca.gov.

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2008 Technical Assistance Conference Calls Schedule

First 5 California hosts the following Technical Assistance Evaluation Conference calls through the end of 2008:

September 22 - Monday - 10:00-10:30 a.m.
October 15 - Wednesday - 10:00-10:30 a.m.
November 13 - Thursday - 10:00-10:30 a.m.
December 16 - Tuesday - 10:00-10:1030 a.m.

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Annual Report training

For upcoming Annual Report/School Readiness training opportunities please go to www.first5eval.com, under the "What's New" section. There are still spaces available for in-person and Web-based trainings in September.

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CARES Database reports available

The new and improved CARES Database and FY 07/08 Progress Reports are now available online. Please contact Yury Kleminkov from AJW, Inc. at techsupport@ajwi.com or (415) 659-8149 to gain access to the system.

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